



Remarks

By

Ms. Kiki Gbeho

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

at

The High Performance Movement Lecture Series

Mining Auditorium, Mining Building

1 August 2016

Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)

Windhoek, Namibia

Hon. Dr. Becky, R.K. Ndjoze-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation

Hon. Maureen Magreth Hinda, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

H.E. Alhaji Abdul Rahman Harruna Atta, High Commissioner of the Republic of Ghana to Namibia and Botswana

Mr. Sidi. Abdullahi Ladan, Acting High Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Namibia

Mr. Tolga Arslan, Deputy Head of Mission of the Republic of Turkey to Namibia

Representatives of the Diplomatic Core

Representatives of the UN

Private Sector Representatives

Professors, Academics, Researchers and Students

Director of Ceremonies

Media Houses present

All distinguished guests and friends of the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that I contribute to this lecture series and discuss leveraging private sector innovation and academic research for poverty eradication.

Allow me to first express my gratitude to the Rector of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), Professor Tjivikua, for the opportunity, to interact with you on an issue germane to Namibia and its current War on Poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by posing a question: If you want to make the world a better place, for you and for your children's children, what goals would you set?

- Would you end poverty and inequality so that people everywhere are able to meet their basic needs?
- Would you protect the planet for future generations?
- Or would you educate children, including all girls, knowing the impact this could have on development?

In answer to these very same questions, World Leaders came together at the turn of the century and agreed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs, focused on halving the number of people living in extreme poverty, and led to tremendous development progress around the world:

- The proportion of people living in extreme poverty was halved between 2002 and 2012, from 26 to 13 per cent. Yet, one in eight people continue to live in extreme poverty in 2012.¹
- The number of hungry people declined from 15 to 11 per cent. Although, 800 million people still go to bed hungry every day.²
- The number of the world's workers, living on less than USD1.90 per day declined from 28 to 10 percent. But still 16 percent of all youth are living below the poverty line in 2015.³

¹ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016

² ibid

³ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016

Therefore, in 2015, the world agreed a new set of goals, more ambitious in their scope, set to be achieved by 2030, and designed to change the world for the better.

These Sustainable Development Goals--17 in number--are meant to end poverty; combat inequality; build peaceful, and inclusive societies; protect human rights; promote gender equality; and protect the planet and its natural resources for future generations.

And perhaps most important for my presentation today is that if this comprehensive agenda, is to be implemented a multi-sectoral approach where all goals are addressed simultaneously, is required.

Namibia, in June this year, launched the domestication of the SDGs. However, implementation of these Goals needs the research and thought capability of academia and the energy and innovation of the private sector, so creative approaches to address poverty and inequality can be found.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Accelerating economic growth is one of the most effective global poverty eradication tools. Examples abound of how entrepreneurship has lifted millions of people out of poverty. Whether this was through a shift to a market based economy in China, that

lifted nearly 800 million out of poverty⁴; the garment manufacturing industry in Bangladesh on which more than 20 million people are dependant⁵; or the cut flower industry in Kenya that helped to diversify its export base.

However, global best practice and research have established that economic growth alone is not sufficient for sustainable and inclusive poverty eradication.

Countries that have been able to measure success have combined economic objectives with social policies in ways that are mutually supportive.

For example, in China and Costa Rica sustainable and inclusive economic growth was complemented by investments in human capital and skills development, (China became the world's manufacturer and Costa Rica sharpened its focus on ICT) which in turn created employment opportunities leading to wealth generation.

Distinguished guests, the private sector's innovation and entrepreneurship has and can continue to foster bottom up growth. It can also help translate policy and plans into action.

- Private sector could help solve the challenge of serving people in hard to reach places. By selling goods and commodities to urban distressed areas as well as to poor rural villages, private

⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/04/22>

sector can develop distribution links to consumers while also harnessing knowledge about the actual needs of these people.

- Private sector through SMEs can create decent jobs, spur economic growth while acting as an incubator for larger firms. (For example how do we increase the number of companies such as My Republik who supply large chains (Woolworths/Edgars) or how do we increase manufacturing of school uniforms (90% imported) in Namibia.
- In the midst of the worst drought that Namibia, and indeed the region has faced in decades, how can private sector help in finding solutions to climate change. For example by making available low cost technologies to farmers to reverse soil degradation, conserve water, and to find energy solutions for irrigation and manufacturing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namibia has good stories to tell when it comes to development in large part due to a stable economy and focus on the delivery of social services.

Namibia ranks number 5 in Africa in terms of gender parity in parliament⁶; number 1 in Africa in terms of press freedom. Over 90% of Namibian children go to school; a 50% reduction in HIV infections

⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union “Women in national parliaments as at 1 August 2015”

has been registered⁷. Namibia is considered a leader in effecting one of the fastest reductions in poverty rates on the continent.

Despite these good stories, Namibia has unfinished business.

With a Gini coefficient of 0.59⁸, inequality is still high, approximately 27% of the population still lives in poverty and youth unemployment stands at 39%⁹.

The 2016 Global Innovation Index ranks Namibia 93rd out of 128 countries. Namibia ranks 90th on knowledge creation and 76th on university/industry collaboration. And despite Namibia's high expenditure on education, it ranks 100 on human capital and research potential. Are we generating innovators?

More needs to be done, private sector has a role.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Therefore, when it comes to Academia, engagement is critical to ensure that graduates can solve development problems; are employable; and possess skills that make them productive members of society.

Academia can support the private sector to think through and develop solutions for sustainable production in order to preserve scarce resources.

⁷ 2015 Namibia MDG report

⁸ NDP 4

⁹ 2014 Namibia Labor Force Survey

Government has long recognized the importance of Research, Science and Technology as an engine of economic growth and development, hence Acts such as the Research Science and Technology Act, 2004.

This Act led to the creation of the National Commission on Research Science and Technology (NCRST).

Madame Moderator, By 2050, the world will need to produce twice as much food as was produced in the year 2000¹⁰, but with the same amount of land and using less water.

As UNDP with the support of NCRST we recently conducted research on the genetic diversity of grains, vegetables and fruits which will become even more crucial for food security in times of drought.

Other ongoing academic research in Namibia includes the Malaria Elimination Partnership between the University of Namibia and global institutions such as the University of California.

Policy-makers are focused on the need to bring practical solutions to development challenges. This information must be accessible, and politically useful.

Another important role of academia is capacity building through global partnership. Academia cooperates to educate a new generation of leaders. For instance, the Namibia-German Logistics

¹⁰ The state of world plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

Centre through NUST certifies students on Supply Chain Management; an important area in terms of supporting the growth of the Walvis Bay Corridor.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Namibia develops its National Development Plan 5, and implements the global and regional development frameworks; i.e. SDGs and Agenda 2063, academia has an important role to play in providing relevant baseline data and analysis. Academia will be critical in tracking progress needed to measure success and to ensure accountability.

Distinguished Participants,

As I near the end of my remarks, I wish to reiterate the importance of private sector and academic partnerships to deliver on Namibia's growth and poverty eradication paradigm.

We have the necessary political commitment articulated in the various frameworks ranging from Vision 2030, the HPP, the Blue Print on poverty reduction and wealth creation, and the upcoming NDP5; taking into account global regional frames such as the SDGs and Vision 2063. As H.E. the President has stated, it is now time for action.

In partnership we can end poverty not only where it is easiest to do so, but also where it is hardest to make progress.

If Namibia is to emerge victorious in its war on poverty by 2025, a new action oriented approach, inclusive of the private sector and supported by academia is imperative.

As the UN and your partner of choice, we are ready to do our part; as knowledge brokers and providers of technical assistance. We can share best practice and facilitate interaction, with key stakeholders.

I started this conversation, by asking what goals you would set to make the world a better place. The world and indeed Namibia has set the agenda. So in conclusion, I ask one more question, how will you as private sector and academia, contribute to its realization.

I thank you for your attention.